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SUBJECT: USAU: COMMISSIONER LAMAMRA BENDS GENERAL WARD'S  
EAR ON SOMALIA

Classified By: USAU Ambassador Michael A. Battle, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

This message is from USAU Ambassador Michael A. Battle

¶1. (C) Summary: In what has become a regular exchange during U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) Commander General Ward's semiannual visits to Addis Ababa, African Union (AU) Peace and Security Commissioner Ramtane Lamamra broke with his tradition of providing a security tour d'horizon and devoted almost an entire hour to developments in Somalia. He warned that decisive action must be taken in 2010 if the TFG is to be successful before the end of its mandate 18 months from now, including military operations to extend TFG control throughout Mogadishu and possible seizure of Kismayo. He lamented that the long-awaited offensive by the TFG and AMISOM has not materialized largely because of insufficient international support, singling out the Arab states for particular condemnation.

The status quo is untenable  
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¶2. (C) In what has become a regular exchange during General Ward's semiannual visits to Addis Ababa, Peace and Security Commissioner Lamamra broke with his tradition of providing a security tour d'horizon and instead exchanged views with his guests on Somalia for approximately one hour on February 9. The issue was fresh on Lamamra's mind as he had met with the Somali Deputy Prime Minister Sharif Hassan earlier that day. The commissioner had also visited Mogadishu just 15 days before, where he said one can "feel how dangerous the situation is." He recounted how TFG President Sheikh Sharif's chief of staff warned him to stay away from the window of the TFG office or risk being shot by a sniper.

¶3. (C) Lamamra said the AU and the international community can ill afford to have another year like 2009, all the progress of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) notwithstanding. Something must be done to change the dynamic, he warned, and the TFG has only until October 2011 to tip the balance. The TFG must demonstrate more authority than it has, alluding to a host of capacity challenges. He credited the TFG for relaunching some government activities. The situation in Somalia "can go either way," he assessed.

¶4. (C) Lamamra identified two centers of gravity to shift the momentum in the TFG's favor. The TFG must succeed in pushing

al-Shabaab from Mogadishu and regaining control of the capital. Lamamra also advocated denying the port town of Kismayo to the insurgents. Lamamra said an eventual TFG-AMISOM offensive in Mogadishu is widely rumored, with al-Shabaab moving reinforcements from Kismayo in anticipation. However, he lamented that no action has been taken yet.

"Pay stimulates patriotism"

15. (C) No longer is the number of friendly fighters the issue, Lamamra asserted. What is needed now are salaries and equipment. Lamamra reported that the government of Dubai recently donated 30 four-wheel drive vehicles for the offensive, but that the TFG lacks the heavy machine-guns to transform them into "technicals." Lamamra lamented the lack of support to the TFG, especially by the Arab states whom the AU has unsuccessfully courted for months. Besides Dubai's donation of vehicles, modest support has come from Libya in the form of \$2 million for TFG salaries, and a commitment by Sudan to equip and transport Djibouti's AMISOM contingent. (Note: Lamamra said the Arab League is considering convening a meeting on Somalia by the end of March before the League holds its Summit in Libya. End Note.) But Lamamra fears this is too little, too late. "We are producing handicrafts, which are beautiful, when what we really need is industrial production." Lamamra requested high-level USG diplomacy in pressuring the Arab and other states for support, citing Qatar and Turkey in particular. (Note: Lamamra reported that President Museveni is preparu)6J#QB3VZCZ

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for the TFG technicals.)

16. (C) Asked if the AU could publicly defend an AMISOM-supported offensive, Lamamra indicated that AU advocacy would accompany the campaign but not precede it. Explaining that the best defense is a good offense, Lamamra said al-Shabaab's regular attacks on AMISOM positions argues for offensive action to create space between the insurgents and friendly positions, if nothing else.

17. (C) Lamamra reported that al-Shabaab is recruiting and is able to pay its fighters, some of whom are Kenyan, higher salaries than the TFG can offer. He attributed al-Shabaab's relative purchasing power to its control of Kismayo sea port, and quite possibly to its connections with pirate syndicates. Al-Shabaab is so brazen now that it has established training camps and broadcasts graduation ceremonies as part of its propaganda campaign. That said, Kenyan Army maneuvers along the Somali border had caused al-Shabaab to shift its forces, indicating that its strength is insufficient to counter threats on multiple fronts. Lamamra also noted al-Shabaab's links with al-Qaida and cited the recent killing in Mogadishu of a Jordanian al-Shabaab leader by his own bodyguard. The suicide attacks in Mogadishu further suggest al-Qaida's influence.

18. (C) Responding to a question by USAU Ambassador Battle about AMISOM's mandate, Lamamra was adamant that it is flexible enough, especially given the troop-contributing countries' willingness to take off the gloves. The Force Commander, Major General Nathan Mugisha, wants to go on the offensive. AMISOM troops would be accompanied by approximately 6,500 Somali Security Forces, whom Mugisha has been training and mentoring. He only needs assurance that his fighters, Somali and AMISOM, will be remunerated, as well as combat multipliers like rotary wing and maritime assets.

Counterpiracy tactics

19. (C) Lamamra recommended an adjustment in counterpiracy tactics, echoing conventional wisdom that says pirates cannot be defeated at sea. International vessels engaged in

counterpiracy should hug Somali's coastline, paying particular attention to the harbors and coastal villages pirates are known to frequent, and perhaps even disembarking for limited engagements. The sea is vast, suggested Lamamra, but the pirates all have to return to shore sooner or later.

The time for inclusion is over  
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¶10. (C) On the political front, Lamamra said that "inclusion has its limits." The TFG is representative enough. Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamaah (ASWJ) can be accommodated, but not al-Shabaab or Hizbul Islam. In his discussion with the Deputy Prime Minister, Lamamra said he was told that most Somalis are "sick and tired" of al-Shabaab.

Iran's interest in Somalia  
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¶11. (C) Lamamra reported that the Iranian foreign minister attended the recent AU Summit and in a meeting with the Somali president, offered to give the Somali Security Forces 3,000 military uniforms. Furthermore, if AMISOM accepts, Iran will supply a hospital in Mogadishu. The Iranian intent, Lamamra said, is to "show they are not supportive of radical groups" in Somalia.

Comment:  
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¶12. (C) Most of what Lamamra said was old hat. What was noteworthy, however, was that he clearly had a message to deliver on Somalia and, pleasantries aside, he dedicated almost an entire hour doing it. Lamamra is adamant that action must be taken to change the status quo, and reminded the international community that not only is the TFG our only option, but it comes with an expiration date. He is also

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clearly frustrated with the lack of assistance from the League of Arab States and seeks USG help in changing that dynamic as well.

¶13. (U) General Ward has not cleared this cable.  
YATES